



Edition 3.1
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ELPAC

English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication

ELPAC ATC - Test Taker Preparation



ELPAC is developed in cooperation with:

ENOVATE

ENOVATE is responsible for the technical infrastructure to host and operate the ELPAC test including the provision of technical support to users on request.

Zurich University
of Applied Sciences



ZHAW is responsible for the English language and linguistic aspects of the ELPAC test including the evaluation of ELPAC test items, test format and the ELPAC examiner training.

General information about ELPAC

The ELPAC test has been developed by EUROCONTROL to meet ICAO and European Commission requirements for air traffic controllers and pilots to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language for aeronautical communications between air traffic controllers and pilots, and between controllers and controllers.

ELPAC is designed for licensed operational air traffic controllers and pilots. It reflects the range of communication tasks undertaken in air traffic control and pilot operations. The focus of the test is on language proficiency and not on operational procedures. The ELPAC test assesses language proficiency at ICAO levels 4 and 5. The ELPAC test comprises two test papers:

- Paper 1 Listening Comprehension
- Paper 2 Oral Interaction.

Paper 1 Listening Comprehension, tests the understanding of communications between pilots and controllers and between controllers and controllers in both routine and non-routine situations. The recordings are based on authentic material and range from short standard pilot/controller transmissions to longer communications in which the controller deals with non-routine or unexpected situations with pilots and other controllers. This test lasts approximately 40-45 minutes and is generic to all ATC functions – tower, approach and en route.

A sample version of Paper 1 is available for familiarisation on: www.elpac.info.

Paper 2 Oral Interaction with non-visual (1) and visual tasks (2) requires you to demonstrate in task 1a and task 1b:

- appropriate use of standard ICAO phraseology
- switching between standard ICAO phraseology and plain English
- making an appropriate response to a message
- resolving misunderstandings
- dealing effectively with the pilot/controller relationship
- negotiating a developing unusual situation
- making a verbal report in plain English

and, in task 2 be able to:

- give opinions
- put forward arguments
- evaluate (advantages & disadvantages)
- speculate

- hypothesise
- produce extended speech in an aviation context.

This test lasts approximately 22 minutes and provides a context appropriate to your experience as a controller – tower, approach or en route.

To achieve a licence endorsement, it is necessary to obtain a pass in both Paper 1 and Paper 2. There is no accumulative score. The lowest level achieved, in either Paper 1 or Paper 2, is the final assessment.

ELPAC test – Paper 1

ELPAC Paper 1 has six parts, designed to test a range of different listening skills. As each part appears on the screen before you, you will read and hear instructions on how to answer the questions – by clicking on boxes in a table or by typing a few words in the space provided.

You will not lose marks for spelling mistakes.

The full instructions will disappear once the test part starts but simplified instructions will remain on the screen. At the beginning of each part there is an example, marked 0. The example will illustrate the type of test questions in the respective test part. The example items will be answered by the computer - do NOT try to answer these items.

There is a limited amount of time to answer each test item. When the time for each item is over, the next item, highlighted by a blue frame, will start automatically. **You should align the cursor with the blue frame in which you have to type your answers.** Answer each question as you hear the information. Do not wait until the end of the audio file before answering. This is not a memory test. Once a test part is completed, you cannot go back to it. However, within the time available for each part you can correct or change your answers if you wish to.

The test is time-driven so that once it starts you must complete each item as it is presented to you. When part 6 is finished you will hear “That is the end of the test”. With the sample test you will be able to see how your answers compare to the suggested responses.

Note: Sometimes, at the end of the test, you will be encouraged to complete a short additional section. This is how new items will be trialed. It will take a maximum of 5 minutes.

Description of the structure of Paper 1 (6 parts, 60 items)

Part 1 - SAQ – list: You enter your answers in alphanumeric format (sometimes a short word will be required). Testing recognition. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Part 2 - MCQ – table (readback evaluation): This part tests careful listening for accuracy of readback. There will be one or two correct answers (out of three options). The maximum number of checkmarks (✓) in the table will not be specified. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Note: Pilot readback of frequencies often omit the “decimal” e.g. 135560 instead of 135.560. This is not considered a fault as long as all the numbers are correct.

Part 3 - SAQ: This part tests your comprehension of two communications between a controller and one or two pilots and one communication between two controllers, in unusual and non-routine situations. There are four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has three questions and these will be presented on a separate screen.

Part 4 - Table completion: You type the appropriate flight level(s) into the table cells (not all cells will require an answer). This part of the test will test listening for specific information. The number of answers required will not be specified. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Part 5 - SAQ: tests your comprehension of three telephone communications between controllers and/or pilots in unusual and non-routine situations. These are longer and more complex transmissions than those found in Part 3. There will be four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has five questions and these will be presented on a separate screen.

Part 6: - SAQ: tests your comprehension of radio communications between pilots and controllers dealing with unusual situations. These are longer and more complex transmissions than found in Part 3. There will be four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has five questions and these will be presented on a separate screen.

Note: SAQ: short answer question, MCQ: multiple choice question

Tips for ELPAC Paper 1 test-takers

Make sure that you become familiar with the instructions for each part of Paper 1 and the type of answer you are expected to give.

Read carefully the questions (items) particularly for parts 3, 5 and 6 (SAQ).

Note: especially if the question begins with “Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How?” and respond appropriately.

This is a listening test – so, listen carefully. Do not assume that the pilot/controller will do something because “that’s the obvious thing to do”.

The questions are deliberately spaced to give you time to type the response before you hear the next piece of relevant information for the next question.

Do not listen to the complete transmission before starting to answer the questions – this is not a memory test! Type the answer as you hear the required information which is presented in a logical sequence.

The Short Answer Questions (SAQs) do not require you to type more than 3 or 4 words. But, you will need to be precise and accurate in your answer to show that you correctly understood the question.

It is strongly recommended that in order to become familiar with the layout and questions (items) of paper 1 you go to www.elpac.info and do the test version at least once, if not a couple of times before taking the ELPAC test.

ELPAC test – Paper 2

Paper 2 (Oral Interaction) is divided into two tasks (Task 1a & 1b and Task 2) and involves both visual (face-to-face) and non-visual communication. Paper 2 is designed to assess your performance of both standard ICAO phraseology and plain English in an aeronautical communication.

Paper 2 requires you to demonstrate in Task 1a and Task 1b:

- appropriate use of standard ICAO phraseology;
- switching between standard ICAO phraseology and plain English;
- making an appropriate response to a pilot message;
- resolving misunderstandings;
- dealing effectively with the pilot/controller relationship;
- negotiating a developing unusual situation;
- making a verbal report in plain English,

and, in Task 2 to be able to:

- give opinions;
- put forward arguments;
- evaluate (advantages & disadvantages);
- speculate;
- hypothesise;
- produce extended speech in an aviation context.

Paper 2 lasts approximately 20 minutes and provides a context appropriate to your operational experience – tower, approach or en route.

Description for the structure of Paper 2 (2 tasks)

Task 1a (6 - 8 minutes)

Task 1a is a role play. You will play the part of a controller communicating with a number of pilots played by one of the examiners. There will be no visual contact between you and the examiner. You will have to respond to each pilot message using either standard ICAO phraseology whenever appropriate or plain English. You will have a chart depicting the airspace or the movement area in which the scenario takes place. There are no separation problems and you do not have to co-ordinate with anyone. You will be allowed to make notes on the chart provided. Remember, you are being assessed on your language proficiency, NOT your ability to control traffic.

Note: Your use of standard ICAO phraseology will be checked, but not assessed. If the examiners consider that your phraseology is below the required standard, it will be recommended that you receive training and take an appropriate test of phraseology.

Task 1b (3 - 4 minutes)

This is a visual (face-to-face) communication in which you give a verbal report on the events in Task 1a to the interlocutor now playing the role of your supervisor. You can use the chart and your notes, and may be asked to clarify some points in your report.

Task 2 (7,5 - 9 minutes)

This is a visual communication with an interlocutor in which discussion is first based on an aviation photograph and then moves to aviation issues in a broader context.

Tips for ELPAC Paper 2 test-takers

Listen carefully (in Task 1a) to the pilot messages and respond appropriately.

Do not attempt to control the aircraft. You should not need to provide separation.

Make a complete and accurate report about the unusual situation (Task 1b). The interlocutor may ask for clarification if in Task 1a you have replied "Roger" or "Copied" to pilot messages.

In Task 2 – answer all questions as fully as possible! You will not be assessed on what you think but on how well you can express yourself in English.

It is important that you relax and speak as confidently as you can. It is your responsibility as the candidate to participate in the conversation to the best of your ability.

You can only be assessed on what you say. If you do not say very much you risk being assessed at a level below your true proficiency - because you did not demonstrate the level of language you are normally capable of producing.

Remember, ELPAC is a high-stakes test. The security of the test is paramount. In your own interest avoid discussing the test items and tasks with colleagues.

You are not allowed to bring into the examination room mobile phones, sound recording devices and similar electronic equipment or to take notes. (In task 1a you may only make notes on the chart provided). Do not talk with anybody in the room except the examiner[s].

Proving your identity

Before presenting yourself for the ELPAC Test (Paper 1 and Paper 2) ensure that you have a valid ID with you. You will be asked for proof of identity before being allowed to take the ELPAC test.